BENSON & HEDGES PRIVILEGES CLUB™

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The Best Bistros in Paris

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Left Bank in the heart of St-Germain, this popular, snug spot features hearty country cooking and excellent Burgundy wines. Don't miss the garlicky snails or the turbot in beurre blanc; for dessert, the chocolate charlotte is sublime. Moderate.

Benoit—20 Rue St-Martin, 4e; 42-72-25-76. A bright and plant-filled bistro, serving old-fashioned Lyonnais cooking and first-rate wines. The braised beef with carrots, the mussel soup flavored with smoked bacon, and

Amiable waiters are the norm at Chez Pauline, a Parisian favorite.

mixed salads are the top choices. Moderate.

Bofinger—5 Rue de la Bastille, 4e; 42-72-87-82. The place to go for magnificent, belle époque decor, with an accent on Alsatian cuisine. Try a steaming *choucroute* (sausages, bacon, and smoked pork with sauerkraut), along with one of the excellent wines. The desserts are delectable; we recommend Grand Marnier chocolate cake or Nesselrode ice cream. Moderate.

Chez Georges—1 Rue du Mail, 2e; 42-60-07-11. A bastion of traditional French country cooking—complete with maternal waitresses—offering such specialties as ratatouille Niçoise, foie gras, pâté, cassoulet, and roast duck. Moderate.

Chez Pauline—5 Rue Villedo, 1e; 42-36-20-70. A classic, with red banquettes, fresh flowers, and friendly waiters, plus a menu that includes blanquette de veau, boeuf bourguignonne, rice pudding that is a local legend, and about the best Beaujolais around. Moderate.

La Tour de Montlhéry—5 Rue des Prouvaires, 1e; 42-36-21-82. A modest spot, in the center of old Les Halles, that's always crowded. The food is consistently fresh, and our favorites include mutton with white beans and endive salad tossed with rounds of Poilâne bread. Inexpensive.

Polidor—41 Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, 6e; 43-26-95-34. James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, and Jean-Paul Belmondo came here for the good family-style food, which is still served. Current regulars include Kosuro's College of Paraphysics, so ask to see the house scrapbook. Inexpensive.

Robert et Louise—64 Rue Vieille du Temple, 3e; 42-78-55-89. A family operation, with paneled walls, a warm

Monsieur Jacques, the proud proprietor of La Tour de Montlhéry.

atmosphere, and a reputation for wonderful cooking. Try the boeuf bourguignonne or the open fire-grilled côte de boeuf, as well as fromage blanc and wine in a pitcher. Inexpensive. □

Urban Escapes

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Feminist House of pop art, and the eclectic Farmer's Museum. The Otesaga, which is situated in the middle of all this, also boasts a perfect view overlooking Lake Otsego. Depending on the lake view, rooms range from $86 to $226 per person, including two meals per day.

A similar slice of Americana lies south of New York, at the southeasternmost tip of New Jersey in the

Rocky Mountain high: Colorado's Stanley hotel in Estes Park.

town of Cape May. This is one of the last fully intact Victorian shore towns, and the place to put up is the Mainstay Inn (635 Columbia Ave.; Cape May, NJ 08204; 609-884-8690), a 12-room establishment run by a couple devoted to preserving its 1872 appeal. Bed-and-breakfast accommodations cost from $65 to $105 per double.

DENVER

Among the greenest of pastures is *Keystone* (Keystone Resort; Hwy. 6, Dillon, CO 80435; 303-468-2316), just over an hour west of Denver on the banks of the Snake River. Every aspect of this resort beckons, from the tennis center to the Robert Trent Jones golf links to a fine restaurant. Alternative accommodations to the luxurious lodge ($105 to $135 a night) are two-bedroom condos ($655 to $700).

Our other heartfelt recommendation, the *Stanley* hotel (333 Wonderview; Estes Park, CO 80517; 303-586-3371), is the pride of Rocky Mountain National Park. Perched on a hill overlooking Estes Park Lake and the Rockies, the 86-room white clapboard hotel hasn't seen a change in its exterior since its opening in 1909. Four-poster beds and 19th-century antiques are the norm at $60 to $110 a night.

SAN FRANCISCO

The coast of northern California is premier golf country, with perhaps some of the finest courses in the nation surrounding the *Lodge at Pebble Beach* (Seventeen-Mile Dr.; Pebble Beach, CA 93953; 408-624-3811) and the brand-new *Inn and Links at Spanish Bay* (Seventeen-Mile Dr.; Pebble Beach, CA 93953; 408-624-3811). A whole host of hedonistic opportunities, from spa sessions to tennis games, riding to fine dining, awaits those who can afford from $200 to $1,350 per night, with golf fees an additional $75 to $95.

Golf is not everybody's game, however, and since this is also fine wine country, we suggest a drive north over the Golden Gate to the vineyards of Sonoma County and the *Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa* (Box 1447; Sonoma, CA 95476; 707-938-9000). The original 1926 structure with 180 rooms retains its mission decor of wooden shutters and half-canopy beds; the new wing adds 70 more comfortable accommodations ($120 to $225 per night). □

A California classic: The Lodge at Pebble Beach.

EUROPE'S HOTTEST TICKETS

You don't have to have more connections than a major airline to track down some of Europe's hottest tickets in 1988. The toughest-to-get-into spots can be easy—provided you know whom to ask. For instance, though the New York production of *The Phantom of the Opera* is sold out until the Second Coming, a room at *The Ritz* in London and a short talk with the hotel's concierge are all it takes to see the London production of *Phantom*—or *Cats* or *Les Misérables*—because the hotel has purchased a block of tickets to each show. Call 800-223-5581 for hotel reservations.

Dinner reservations at the legendary *Girardet* restaurant, just outside Geneva, are only slightly less scarce than tickets to *Phantom*, but the odds are better for guests of Lausanne's *Beau-Rivage Palace* hotel who contact the hotel's general manager, Maurice Utech. Call 800-223-6800 (in New York, 212-838-3110) for hotel reservations.

A variety of behind-the-scenes tours of the top restaurants' kitchens, bread shops, and wholesale food markets in Paris are offered by Paris en Cuisine, which also makes reservations for hard-to-book restaurants all over France. In Paris call Robert Noah at 42-61-35-23.

Opening night at *La Scala* on December 7 is the gala event of the season in Milan. The concierges at Milan's *Principe di Savoia* and *Palace* hotels can obtain tickets for opening night and the rest of the opera season. Guests should be prepared to pay a premium above the ticket price. Call 800-223-2340 for hotel reservations. □

BUMPING IS BAD BUSINESS

While airlines may delay a flight with impunity, cancel it without warning, or wait list latecomers, they cannot deny a seat to confirmed passengers without penalty. A federal regulation entitles confirmed passengers who are denied boarding up to 200% of the value of their ticket, or a maximum of $400—provided the passenger arrives at the departure gate at least ten minutes prior to takeoff.

If such recompense fails to comfort, then be aware of the industry's most notorious offenders among the major carriers: Pan Am leads the pack, bumping 15.7 passengers for every 10,000 booked, according to an annual report recently issued by the Department of Transportation. Other offenders include Continental, 8.4; TWA, 6.2; USAir, 4.7; United, 3.9; Eastern, 3.6; Piedmont, 3.6; and Delta, 1.8. American shows the best record at .07. □

BOOKING THE WORLD'S FINEST ROOMS

While paying for a room at the George V in Paris or Hong Kong's Peninsula hotel may test your fortitude and your bank balance, reserving one of them couldn't be easier. Following are phone numbers of the U.S. representatives for some of the world's finest hotels: **Giga Hotels** (800-223-2340; in New York, 212-935-3640) properties include Venice's Gritti Palace and the Grand hotel in Rome. The *Ritz* in Paris, New York City's *Pierre*, and the *Oriental* in Bangkok can all be reserved through **The Leading Hotels of the World** (800-223-6800; in New York, 212-838-3110).

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